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ANDREW BLOCK

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## "OUR TWENTY-FIFTH—"

"Who's speaking?"

"Andrew Block here." And then the shock came.

When one is asked to assist at the celebration of a man's twenty-fifth birthday champagne immediately bubbles into one's thoughts: so when Mr. Andrew Block invited me to take a hand in the celebration of the twenty-fifth anniversary of his entry into the honourable profession of bookselling he very nearly received a curt and unmistakable refusal, for, strange as it may seem, I am not fond of champagne. However, before I had had time to conjure up the curtest terms imaginable he had gone on to explain that all he required was a few select phrases by way of introduction to his twenty-fifth anniversary Catalogue, a brief account of his lurid past and his ability in his profession, a short survey of his stock, a lightning sketch of his staff, and, I presume, a strong recommendation to prospective clients to buy from him and to buy at his prices. I say "presume" because he had not apparently reached his peroration when we were cut off and I felt that I was irrevocably committed to the undertaking. So here goes.

Many Happy Returns!—But is that quite appropriate? It might mean books, it might mean cheques, or, it might mean twenty-five years, and surely no humane judge would pass such a sentence. I must begin again. Mr. Block's ability to sell and his prices may be dealt with together and judged by my own experience. I judiciously overlook the lurid past (knowing nothing about it) and may frankly declare that he has never made me buy anything I did not want to buy, while I have often refused to buy things that I did want, not because his prices were unreasonable, rather because my purse was unequal to the outlay. The "Lamia" he produced the other day was tempting; "Lamia" in boards, with or without the back-label, is not met with every day. A Shelley collection cannot be assembled now-a-days at the prices ruling when I was a boy, yet the nucleus of one may be secured at Bloomsbury Court at a figure not by any means out of the way. "Zastrozzi" is not an easy book to pick up, even slightly trimmed and in a Cockerell binding; "St. Irvyne" and "Laon and Cythna" will also help towards a good foundation. But save in my own particular pet authors my inclination is towards small, thin books that take up little room. In this category those who share my liking may find among Mr. Block's rarities Peacock's "Sir Hornbook" (1814) and a copyright copy of Kipling's "Elephant's Child," while somewhat larger treasures are "Sibylline Leaves," uncut and in the original boards, and Ben Jonson's copy of Vitruvius, and yet a little larger, Sir Isaac Newton's copy of an important astronomical work and Blake's "Book of Job," large paper, proofs on India paper, with a manuscript poem by Blake inserted. Those who prefer choice things of a more portly and less portable size may nurse, as they will, Gould's "Birds"—ten volumes in all—in fine bindings, truly a stalwart company.

As to the prices for these attractive wares, that is the business of the following pages to disclose, and they are far more alluring than anything I can say about them. Therefore, Brother Collector, turn on. Mr. Andrew Block and his staff (I leave the lightning sketch to the photographer) are at your service. They will be glad to see you, and why should you not gladden their hearts on this auspicious occasion?

M. BUXTON FORMAN.



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